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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/963,577	09/27/2001	Ryoichiro Uehara	05711.0122	9686
7590	01/13/2004		EXAMINER	
Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner, L.L.P. 1300 I Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20005-3315			BRITtain, JAMES R	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3677	

DATE MAILED: 01/13/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

<b>Office Action Summary</b>	<b>Application No.</b>	<b>Applicant(s)</b>
	09/963,577	UEHARA ET AL. <i>SW</i>
	<b>Examiner</b>	<b>Art Unit</b>
	James R. Brittain	3677

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication app. appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

## Status

1)  Responsive to communication(s) filed on 03 November 2003.

2a)  This action is **FINAL**.                            2b)  This action is non-final.

3)  Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

## **Disposition of Claims**

4)  Claim(s) 1,3,4,7,8 and 10-12 is/are pending in the application.  
4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)  Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.

6)  Claim(s) 1,3,4,7,8 and 12 is/are rejected.

7)  Claim(s) 10 and 11 is/are objected to.

8)  Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

## Application Papers

9)  The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)  The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a)  accepted or b)  objected to by the Examiner.

    Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

    Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)  The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120**

12)  Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a)  All b)  Some \* c)  None of:

1.  Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2.  Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
3.  Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

13)  Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application) since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.

a)  The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.

14)  Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121 since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.

**Attachment(s)**

1)  Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4)  Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). \_\_\_\_ .  
2)  Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 5)  Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)  
3)  Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) \_\_\_\_ . 6)  Other: \_\_\_\_ .

## DETAILED ACTION

### *Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103*

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

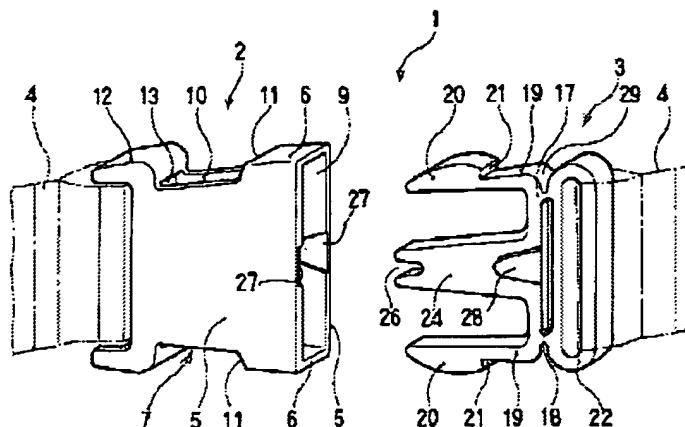
(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1, 3, 4, 7, and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 8-131215 in view of Krauss (US 5590444).

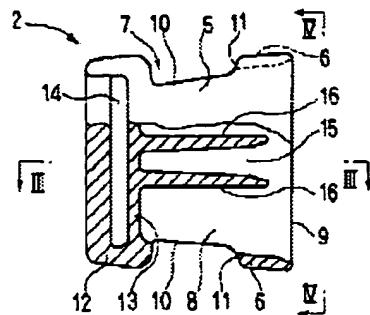
JP 8-131215 (figures 1, 2, 6, 13, 14, 16, 17) teaches a buckle comprising a female body 2 formed with a flat housing and a male body 3 having flexible insertion legs 20 which are engaged with each other by insertion, each of the female body and the male body having a front surface, a rear surface, and right and left side faces, and having butting portion including straight portions 18 and a convex portion 28 formed on the front surface of the male body and a concave portion 27 with straight portions defined by the edge of the mouth of the female body on the inside surface of the front face of the female body 2, wherein the concave 27 and convex 28 portions are formed at a center of the butting portion sandwiched by the straight portions 18 on the male body and the corresponding straight portions of the female body, the convex portion 28 in the butting portions protrudes in a wedge-shaped form with a rounded narrowed leading edge while the concave portion 27 is dented with the inlet expanded, the female and male bodies are thereby formed closely in contact at the butting portions, a guide 24 is protruded linearly from a center of a front end of the convex portion 28 of the male body, and partition pieces 16, 25 for

guiding the guide member on a same line as an axis line of the guide member are provided on an inner surface of the housing of the female body.

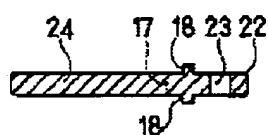
【図1】



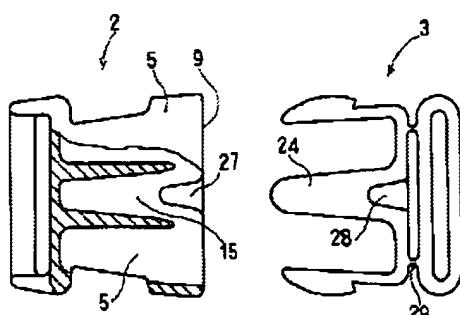
【図2】



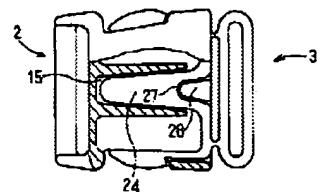
【図6】



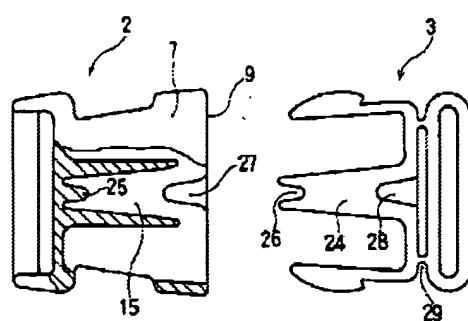
【図13】



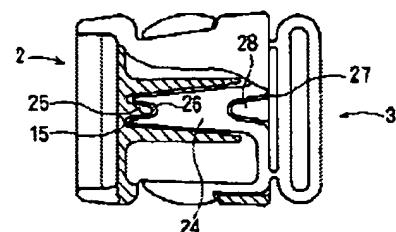
【図14】



【図16】

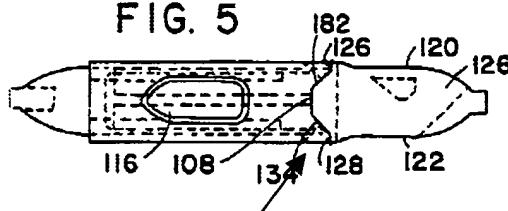


【図17】



The difference is that the convex portion is not trapezoidal and the concave portion does not extend through the thickness of the front face of the female body so as to exist on the front surface. However, Krauss (figures 5-9) teaches a buckle similar to JP 8-131215 and further suggests the use of a trapezoidal butting guide 132, 134, 108 positioned on opposite side faces of the male body fitting into a cooperating recesses 142, 144, 146 on side faces of the opening of the female body that extend completely through the side faces so as to provide a geometry well known in buckles to provide stable interengagement between the male and female bodies.

FIG. 5



Trapezoidal abutment between straight portions

FIG. 6

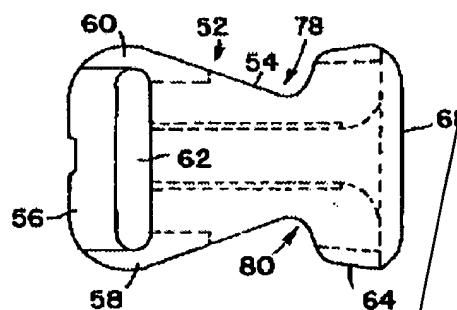


FIG. 7

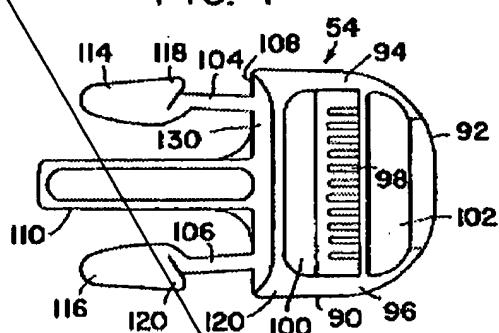


FIG. 8

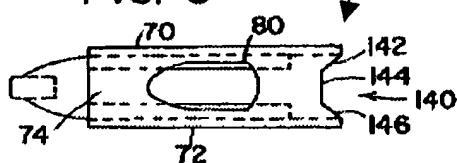
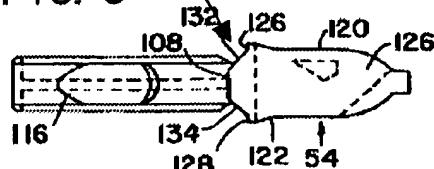


FIG. 9



The creation of interlocking structure with straight sides provides advantages in the buckle art described by Krauss (col. 4, line 66 through col. 5, line 14):

**65 removed from channel 66.**

Importantly, when buckle **50** is in a locked state, the interlocking keys of male member **54** and the interlocking

key receptacles of female member **52** together form a system that applies or distributes the torsional loads across top and bottom walls **70**, **72** of female member **52**. That is, the interlocking key system has thus transferred the torsional loads from resilient arms **104**, **106** to the top and bottom walls of female member **52**. In addition, the interlocking system helps guide arm **110** and resilient arms **104**, **106** of male member **54** to guide squarely in line with the load. Also, if the webbing should become kinked to one side under load, the interlocking key system prevents the male or female member **54**, **52** from being pulled side to side. That is, the interlocking system helps maintain a straight line pull on buckle **50**. This enables resilient arms **104**, **106** to perform their locking function. Male member **54** will therefore remain completely engaged.

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As the JP 8-131215 buckle is designed to have butting convex and concave surfaces on the male and female bodies, respectively, so as to inherently interlock the male and female bodies together at the mouth of the female body against relative lateral movement and it would be advantageous to have the lateral torsional loads well distributed across the front faces of the male and female bodies to the side faces while maintaining square alignment during insertion and preventing lateral movement, it would have been obvious to modify the buckle of JP 8-131215 so that the butting portions are trapezoidal in view of Krauss (figures 5-9) teaching the use of a trapezoidal butting guide **132**, **134**, **108** on the male body fitting into a cooperating

recess 142, 144, 146 extending completely through a minor face of the opening of the female body so as to provide a geometry well known in buckles to provide stable interengagement between the male and female bodies so that torsional forces can be well distributed while providing sure guidance and preventing side to side movement.

As to claim 3, JP 8-131215 shows in figure 1 the concave and convex butting surfaces formed on both front and rear surfaces of the male and female bodies.

In regard to claim 4, JP 8-131215 shows in figure 1 the concave and convex butting surfaces sandwiched between straight butting portions formed on both front and rear surfaces of the male and female bodies. Claim 4 requires butting straight or linear-form butting portions on two opposite sides and the convex and concave portions on one side. JP 8-131215 shows this. Claim 4 is silent on prohibiting other butting configurations such as convex and concave on the opposite surface. There are no limitations in claim 4 to prohibit convex and concave portions on both sides.

As to claim 7, JP 8-131215 shows the concave portion of the female body and the convex portion on the male body in figures 1, 13, 14, 16, and 17.

As to claim 12, the side view shown in figure 1 shows the convex portion and straight portions being notched to a one level lower stepped portion which fits into the female body so as to be overlapped thereby.

Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 8-131215 in view of Krauss (US 5590444) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Isenmann (US 3979934).

JP 8-131215 places the concave butting portion on the female body and the convex butting portion on the male body. JP 8-131215 fails to reverse the locations so that the so that the concave section is upon the male body and the convex section is upon the female body. However, Isenmann (figures 1-7) teaches similar buckle structure acting as a key holder and further suggests including a female body 10 with a flat housing and a convex portion with flanking straight portions that act as butting portions. These butting portions mate with the complementary concave portion with flanking straight portions on the male body 12 that has flexible legs 36 for insertion and engagement with the female body 10. Applicant is reminded that “[I]n considering the disclosure of a reference, it is proper to take into account not only specific teachings of the reference but also the inferences which one skilled in the art would reasonably be expected to draw therefrom.” In re Preda, 401 F.2d 825, 826, 159 USPQ 342, 344 (CCPA 1968). The Isenmann reference suggests to one of ordinary skill in the art that to provide an interlocking connection at the mouth of the female body with the convex butting portion on the female body and the concave butting portion on the male body provides a reversal of the concave and convex butting portions shown by JP 8-131215. Applicant is reminded that the reversal of parts has been held to be an obvious expedient. In re Gazda, 219 F.2d 449, 104 USPQ 400 (CCPA 1955). This teaching of Isenmann shows that it would have been obvious to reverse the keyed portions between the male and female parts of the buckle of JP 8-131215.

***Allowable Subject Matter***

Claims 10 and 11 are objected to as depending from a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

***Response to Arguments***

Applicant's arguments with respect to the claims have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection. The new rejection has been made in response to applicant's amendment to claim 1 that now recites the guide member and partition pieces, new issues not before claimed, but taught by JP 8-131215.

***Conclusion***

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

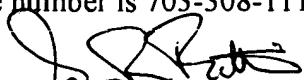
A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to James R. Brittain whose telephone number is 703-308-2222. The examiner can normally be reached on M, W & F 5:30-1:30, T 5:30-2:00 & TH 5:30-4:00.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, J. J. Swann can be reached on 703-306-4115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9326.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-1113.



James R. Brittain  
Primary Examiner  
Art Unit 3677

JRB